

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: Hartpury College
Date of visit: 2 July 2007

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit. It focuses on the themes explored during the visit and does not attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the college's performance.

Achievement and standards

How well did students achieve in 2005/06, and in the current academic year?

- Data for long courses in 2005/06 at levels 1 to 3, taken from the college's self-assessment report (SAR), show that nearly all success rates improved and were well above national rates at level 1 and 3 and in line with the national rate at level 2. Success rates on short courses were above the national rate. At the time of the visit, data already analysed for the academic year 2006/07 indicate that success rates have risen again with much improved retention rates.

Have framework success rates and timeliness of completion for work-based learners improved?

- At the time of the visit the college identified that it had already hit its target for timely framework completion, at 65%. This percentage demonstrates a significant improvement. The college anticipates that several more learners are likely to achieve prior to the end of the academic year, potentially raising the success rate higher.
- The college has adopted a range of well conceived strategies to help bring about this increase in timely completions. These include increased engagement with employers and deploying more trained assessors in the workplace. In addition, there are improved and more detailed techniques for tracking learners' progress. Management of work-based provision has moved closer to curriculum areas, thereby generating greater ownership of the quality of provision

How well are students achieving in key skills qualifications?

- Data, provided by the college, indicate that in 2006/07 the overall pass rate for key skills qualifications is in the region of 72%. This is above the

national average, and represents a significant improvement compared to the previous year. The college has adopted a range of well conceived strategies, including effective liaison between vocational and key skills teachers, which appear to be having a significant positive impact.

Quality of education and training

What improvements have been made to the quality of teaching and learning, including in the use of information and learning technology (ILT) and the integration of key skills learning into vocational learning?

- The college's profile of lesson observation grades from 87 observations during 2006/07 shows improvement in the percentage of lessons graded good or better to nearly three-quarters of lessons observed. The system for observing lessons is well established and uses external observers effectively. In addition, curriculum managers also undertake observations and produce comprehensive reports and use these, along with external reports, in self assessment.
- Resources to support learning are improving as part of an ongoing improvement plan. In addition to providing network connections in all residential accommodation, 58 additional computers have been purchased for teaching purposes. An impressive new equestrian centre is almost completed including a large well-positioned viewing gallery and bright, modern classrooms and staff offices adjacent to the indoor riding school. Plans are in hand to improve animal care and horticulture resources.
- Teachers indicate that a range of strategies has helped them to maintain and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Staff development activities have focused particularly on developing strategies for differentiating learning and improving the quality of key skills lessons.
- The college is actively addressing the professional training of teaching staff. Some 40 staff are currently undertaking a PGCE. The college has a plan in place to ensure that all staff are suitably qualified, and receive professional updating, in line with requirements for all staff to acquire 'qualified teacher learning and skills' status (QTLS) by 2008.
- Improvements in the use of ILT in lessons are ongoing but not yet a strong aspect of the college's work. An ILT strategy has recently been put in place, animal and equine records are held electronically and progress has been made in establishing and populating a virtual learning environment (VLE), although this work is at an early stage. The report

from lesson observations indicates that the use of ILT is still underdeveloped in lessons, except in sports studies.

- The college has continued to evolve the portfolio of provision that it offers. In particular, it has increased access to level 1 and 2 provision, as well as offering shorter, more appropriate courses, such as national awards, and certificates, as well as full diplomas.

Leadership and management

What improvements have been made in the standards of maintenance and working practice in specialist land-based units to ensure that these reflect current industry best practice?

- Since the last inspection a series of monthly checks on maintenance standards and to ensure that good working practice is being promoted has been instigated and undertaken by senior managers. These checks have resulted in an emphasis on increased tidiness and adherence to health and safety codes of conduct. Specialist units are well maintained and orderly. Veterinary medicines are stored safely and securely. The college's health and safety officer makes regular checks across the whole campus and risk assessments are reviewed, as a minimum, annually. There is good communication and liaison between teachers and technical staff on specialist units.
- In the equine curriculum area, a restructure of management roles has taken place to clarify responsibilities and to ensure accountability for all aspects of provision, including the care and maintenance of resources. This has proved effective in ensuring that equine resources are well maintained and that the many students who keep their horses at livery at the college adhere to the college's codes of conduct for working practice. Ground rules for horse care and management, including those covering health and safety, are clearly written and published in a handbook. Staff and student supervisors oversee the livery yards and re-enforce high standards of work. Standard setting activities, involving staff and all students, take place at the beginning of each academic year.

How has the self assessment process been developed to ensure clearly identification and evaluation of key strengths and areas for improvement?

- The SAR produced for 2005/06 contained key strengths and areas for improvement for each curriculum area, however much of the

accompanying report was overly descriptive. For 2006/07, a new template has been produced that prompts managers more effectively to sharpen their evaluation and increase its rigour. The template requires precise evaluation, using a set of prompts, for each key question and its completion is supported by one to one help from senior managers. Managers have a clear understanding of the role of self assessment. Action plans now have a column added to record a timescale for each action.

- Evaluation of the outcomes for children and young people is largely based on evaluating the provision made by the college. However, some measurement of the impact on students of this work is taking place, in particular using student satisfaction surveys. The college recognises that this needs to take a higher priority.

Any other observations from the visit not identified in the pre-visit analysis:

- The college has firm plans to introduce GCE A level provision from September 2007. A curriculum including 12 subject areas and collaboration with another local college to offer several other subjects is planned. This provision is designed to meet the needs of students enrolled on one of the college's sports academy programmes in response to their requests for an alternative to the vocational courses currently offered.
- The college has maintained and built on its strengths in guidance and support. In particular, the placing of essential skills teachers in each curriculum area has supported considerable improvement in success rates in both main qualifications and key skills.